

## Retail Sales Worker Supervisors and Managers

(O\*NET 41002)

### Significant Points

- Opportunities will be best for candidates with experience as a retail salesperson, cashier, or customer service worker.
- Work schedules may be irregular and often include evenings and weekends.
- Increasingly, a post-secondary degree is needed for advancement into upper management.

### Nature of the Work

In every one of the thousands of retail stores across the country, there is at least one retail sales worker supervisor or manager. Because the retail trade industry provides goods and services directly to customers, the retail supervisor or manager is responsible for ensuring that customers receive satisfactory service and quality goods. They also answer customers' inquiries and handle complaints.

Retail supervisors and managers oversee the work of retail salespersons, cashiers, customer service representatives, stock clerks, and grocery clerks. (Some of these occupations are discussed elsewhere in the *Handbook*.) They are responsible for interviewing, hiring, and training employees, as well as preparing work schedules and assigning workers to specific duties. (Managers in eating and drinking places are discussed in the *Handbook* statement on restaurant and food service managers.)

The responsibilities of retail sales worker supervisors and managers vary, depending on the size and type of establishment, as well as the level of management. As the size of retail stores and the types of goods and services increase, these workers increasingly specialize in one department or one aspect of merchandising. Larger organizations tend to have many layers of management. As in other industries, supervisory-level retail managers usually report to their mid-level counterparts who, in turn, report to top-level managers. Small stores, and stores that carry specialized merchandise, usually have fewer levels of management.

Supervisory-level retail managers, often referred to as department managers, provide day-to-day oversight of individual departments, such as shoes, cosmetics, or housewares in large department stores; produce and meat in grocery stores; and sales in automotive dealerships.

Department managers commonly are found in large retail stores. These managers establish and implement policies, goals, objectives, and procedures for their specific departments; coordinate activities with other department heads; and strive for smooth operations within their departments. They supervise employees who price and ticket goods and place them on display; clean and organize shelves, displays, and inventory in stockrooms; and inspect merchandise to ensure that none is outdated. Department managers also review inventory and sales records, develop merchandising techniques, coordinate sales promotions, and may greet and assist customers and promote sales and good public relations.

In small or independent retail stores, retail sales worker supervisors and managers not only directly supervise sales associates, but are also responsible for the operation of the entire store. In these instances, they may be called store managers. Some are also self-employed store owners.

### Working Conditions

Most retail sales worker supervisors and managers have offices within the stores. Although some time is spent in the office completing merchandise orders or arranging work schedules, a large portion of their workday is spent on the sales floor.

Work hours of supervisors and managers vary greatly among retail establishments, because work schedules usually depend on customers' needs. Most managers and supervisors work 40 hours or more a week; long hours are not uncommon. This is particularly true during sales, holidays, busy shopping hours, and when inventory is taken. They are expected to work evenings and weekends but usually are compensated by getting a weekday off. Hours can change weekly, and managers sometimes must report to work on short notice, especially when employees are absent. Independent owners can often set their own schedules, but hours must be convenient to customers.

### Employment

Retail sales worker supervisors and managers held about 1.7 million jobs in 1998. About 2 out of 5 were self-employed retail sales managers, mainly store owners. Although managers work throughout the retail trade industry, most are found in grocery and department stores, motor vehicle dealers, and clothing and accessory stores.

### Training, Other Qualifications, and Advancement

Retail sales worker supervisors and managers usually acquire knowledge of management principles and practices—an essential requirement for a management position in retail trade—through work experience. Many supervisors and managers begin their careers on the sales floor as salespersons, cashiers, or customer service workers. In these positions, they learn merchandising, customer service, and the basic policies and procedures of the store.

The educational background of retail sales worker supervisors and managers varies widely. Regardless of the education received, business courses, including accounting; administration; marketing; management; and sales; as well as courses in psychology; sociology; and communication, are helpful. Supervisors and managers must be computer literate because almost all cash registers and inventory control systems are now computerized.

Most supervisors and managers who have post-secondary education hold associate or bachelor's degrees in liberal arts, social science, business, or management. To gain experience, many post-secondary students participate in internship programs that are usually developed jointly by individual schools and retail firms.

Once on the job, the type and amount of training available for supervisors and managers varies from store to store. Many national chains have formal training programs for management trainees that include both classroom and in-store training. Training may last from 1 week to 1 year or more, because many retail organizations require their trainees to gain experience during all shopping seasons. Other retail organizations may not have formal training programs.



*Retail sales worker supervisors and managers resolve customers' complaints and respond to inquiries.*

Ordinarily, classroom training includes such topics as interviewing and customer service skills, employee and inventory management, and scheduling. Management trainees may work in one specific department while training on the job, or they may rotate through several departments to gain a well-rounded knowledge of the store's operation. Training programs for franchisees are generally extensive, covering all functions of the company's operation, including promotion, marketing, management, finance, purchasing, product preparation, human resource management, and compensation. College graduates can usually enter management training programs directly.

Retail sales worker supervisors and managers must get along with all types of people. They need initiative, self-discipline, good judgment, and decisiveness. Patience and a mild temperament are necessary when dealing with demanding customers. They must also be able to motivate, organize, and direct the work of subordinates and communicate clearly and persuasively with customers and other managers.

Individuals who display leadership and team building skills, self-confidence, motivation, and decisiveness become candidates for promotion to assistant store manager or store manager. A post-secondary degree may speed advancement, because it is viewed by employers as a sign of motivation and maturity—qualities deemed important for promotion to more responsible positions. In many retail establishments, managers are promoted from within the company. In small retail establishments, where the number of positions is limited, advancement to a higher management position may come slowly. Large establishments most often have extensive career ladder programs and may offer managers the opportunity to transfer to another store in the chain or to the central office if an opening occurs. Although promotions may occur more quickly in large establishments, some managers must relocate every several years in order to advance. Within a central office, retail sales supervisors and managers can become advertising, marketing, and public relations managers. These managers coordinate marketing plans, monitor sales, and propose advertisements and promotions. Supervisors and managers can also become purchasing managers, buyers, and purchasing agents who purchase goods and supplies for their organization or for resale. (These occupations are covered in other *Handbook* statements.)

Some supervisors and managers, who have worked in the retail industry for a long time, open their own stores. However, retail trade is highly competitive, and although many independent retail owners succeed, some fail to cover expenses and eventually go out of business. To prosper, retail owners usually need good business sense and strong customer service and public relations skills.

### Job Outlook

Because most jobs for retail sales worker supervisors and managers do not require post-secondary education, competition is expected for jobs with the most attractive earnings and working conditions. Candidates who have retail experience will have the best opportunities.

Employment of retail sales worker supervisors and managers is expected to grow more slowly than average for all occupations through the year 2008. Growth in this occupation will be restrained somewhat as retail companies place more emphasis on sales staff employment levels and increase the number of responsibilities their retail sales worker supervisors and managers have. Some companies may require their sales staff to report directly to upper management personnel, bypassing the department-level manager. However, many job openings are expected to occur as experienced supervisors and managers move into higher levels of management, transfer to other occupations, or leave the labor force.

Projected employment growth of retail managers will mirror, in part, the patterns of employment growth in the industries in which they are concentrated. For example, average growth is expected in grocery stores as they expand their selection of merchandise to accommodate customers' desires for one-stop shopping. The number

of self-employed retail sales worker supervisors and managers is expected to decline as independent retailers face increasing competition from national chains.

Unlike middle- and upper-level management positions, store-level retail supervisors and managers generally will not be affected by the restructuring and consolidation taking place at the corporate and headquarters level of many retail chain companies.

### Earnings

Salaries of retail managers vary substantially, depending upon the level of responsibility; length of service; and type, size, and location of the firm.

Median annual earnings of salaried marketing and sales worker supervisors, including commission, in 1998 were \$29,570. The middle 50 percent earned between \$21,850 and \$42,640 a year. The lowest 10 percent earned less than \$16,700 and the highest 10 percent earned more than \$71,910 a year. Median annual earnings in the industries employing the largest number of salaried marketing and sales worker supervisors in 1997 were as follows:

New and used car dealers .....	\$50,100
Grocery stores .....	24,900
Miscellaneous shopping goods stores .....	22,400
Department stores .....	21,900
Gasoline service stations .....	21,000

Compensation systems vary by type of establishment and merchandise sold. Many managers receive a commission, or a combination of salary and commission. Under a commission system, retail managers receive a percentage of department or store sales. These systems offer managers the opportunity to significantly increase their earnings, but they may find that their earnings depend on their ability to sell their product and the condition of the economy. Managers who sell large amounts of merchandise often receive bonuses or other awards.

Retail managers receive typical benefits and, in some cases, stock options. In addition, retail managers generally are able to buy their store's merchandise at a discount.

### Related Occupations

Retail supervisors and managers serve customers, supervise workers, and direct and coordinate the operations of an establishment. Others with similar responsibilities include managers in restaurants, wholesale trade, hotels, banks, and hospitals.

### Sources of Additional Information

Information on employment opportunities for retail managers may be obtained from the employment offices of various retail establishments or State employment service offices.

General information on management careers in retail establishments is available from:

☛ National Retail Federation, 325 7th St. NW., Suite 1100, Washington, DC 20004. Internet: <http://www.nrf.com>

Information on management careers in grocery stores, and schools offering related programs, is available from:

☛ Food Marketing Institute, 800 Connecticut Ave. NW., Publications Dept., Washington, DC 20006-2701.

Information about management careers and training programs in the motor vehicle dealers industry is available from:

☛ National Automobile Dealers Association, Public Relations Dept., 8400 Westpark Dr., McLean, VA 22102-3591.

Information about management careers in convenience stores is available from:

☛ National Association of Convenience Stores, 1605 King St., Alexandria, VA 22314-2792.